

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 134347
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 HA-05 EB-08 AGRE-00 COME-00 TRSE-00 /090 R

DRAFTED BY AF/C:WSWING:LM
APPROVED BY AF/C:LDJUNIOR
-----121800 260449Z /20
P 260304Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: MOPS, CG

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON SHABA

1. SITUATION IN SHABA CONTINUES TO BE DOMINANT
THEME IN LEADING U.S. PAPERS. WASHINGTON POST FRONT
PAGE ARTICLE BY DAVID OTTAWAY IN MAY 25 EDITION
ENTITLED "ZAIRE AREA FAR FROM STABILIZED" FOCUSES
ESSENTIALLY ON LIMITED MEANS AVAILABLE TO FRENCH TO
STABILIZE SHABA FROM SECURITY POINT OF VIEW AND A
POSSIBLE WESTERN OR AFRICAN FORCE TO PROVIDE BASIC
SECURITY IN KOLWEZI AND OTHER MAJOR SHABA CENTERS.
TEXT FOLLOWS.

2. QUOTE. DESPITE LAST WEEK'S RECAPTURE OF KOLWEZI
BY FRENCH, BELGIAN AND ZAIRIAN PARATROOPERS, THE
SITUATION IN ZAIRE'S SOUTHERN SHABA PROVINCE IS
STILL FAR FROM STABILIZED AND FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
REGARDING THE FUTURE SECURITY OF ITS MAJOR TOWNS
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PAGE 02 STATE 134347

REMAIN UNRESOLVED.

3. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR TO JOURNALISTS
WHO VISITED KOLWEZI DURING THE PAST FOUR DAYS THAT
THE 650 FRENCH FOREIGN LEGIONNAIRES INVOLVED IN
SECURING THE TOWN ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY WELL EQUIPPED

TO CARRY OUT MORE THAN BRIEF SEARCH AND DESTROY
OPERATIONS IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY.

4. THE FRENCH HAVE NO ARMORED CARS, ONLY A FEW
HELICOPTERS AND LIMITED SUPPLIES. THIS, PERHAPS,
EXPLAINS WHY THEY HAVE NOT GONE AFTER REBEL FORCES
HEADING FOR ANGOLA WITH A GROUP OF EUROPEAN HOSTAGES.

5. YESTERDAY, MILITARY OFFICIALS REPORTED THAT TWO
FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE KILLED ON TUESDAY WHEN THE
LEGIONNAIRES FANNED OUT IN TWO SEPARATE OPERATIONS
OUTSIDE KOLWEZI IN SEARCH OF SMALL REBEL GROUPS
STILL OPERATING IN THE AREA.

6. BUT THE FUTURE OF THE MINING CENTER SEEMED IN
DOUBT FOLLOWING THE FAILURE OF FRENCH-SPEAKING
AFRICAN STATES TO REACH AGREEMENT AT THEIR PARIS
SUMMIT ON SENDING A PAN-AFRICAN FORCE INTO SHABA.

7. WITHOUT SOME OUTSIDE HELP, IT IS BELIEVED HERE
THAT KOLWEZI IS LIKELY TO FALL INTO REBEL HANDS
AGAIN OR AT LEAST REMAIN TOO INSECURE TO PERMIT THE
REVIVAL OF THE SHATTERED TOWN AND PARTICULARLY ITS
LARGE COPPER, COBALT AND ZINC MINES.

8. SINCE FRANCE HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO
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PAGE 03 STATE 134347

WITHDRAW ITS 800-MAN FORCE ONCE ALL WHITE HOSTAGES
ARE RESCUED, THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISCUSSION AMONG
WESTERN EMBASSIES HERE ABOUT A JOINT WESTERN FORCE
TO DEFEND KOLWEZI.

9. IT IS NOT KNOWN HERE, HOWEVER, WHETHER WESTERN
COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, ARE POLITICALLY
PREPARED FOR SUCH A COMMITMENT.

10. ONE POSITIVE NOTE IN THE CURRENT SITUATION
WAS THE ZAIRIAN-BELGIAN RECONCILIATION ACHIEVED
YESTERDAY IN A MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT MOBUTU
SESE SEKO AND PREMIER LEO TINDEMANS IN PARIS. THE
RECONCILIATION HOLDS OUT THE HOPE OF CONTINUED
BELGIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE OPERATION OF SHABA MINES
BUT DOES NOT RESOLVE THE THORNY ISSUE OF SECURITY.

11. IN AN EFFORT TO REASSURE WHITES IN ANOTHER
MINING TOWN 65 MILES NORTHWEST OF THE SHABA PROVINCIAL
CAPITAL OF LUBUMBASHI, A COLUMN OF FRENCH LEGIONNAIRES
SET OFF TUESDAY FROM KOLWEZI HEADING EASTWARD TO

LIKASI. THEY ARE EXPECTED TO SHOW THE FLAG FOR
48 HOURS.

12. WHITES THROUGHOUT SHABA HAVE BECOME EXTREMELY
EDGY SINCE THE KILLING OF AT LEAST 120 EUROPEANS IN
KOLWEZI DURING THE SIX-DAY REBEL OCCUPATION THERE.
IN ADDITION, 60 TO 70 WHITES ARE MISSING AND MANY
OF THEM ARE THOUGHT TO BE HOSTAGES OF A REBEL
COLUMN RETREATING BACK INTO ANGOLA.

13. AMONG THE DEAD AND MISSING ARE AT LEAST TWO
AND POSSIBLY FOUR AMERICANS. THE U.S. EMBASSY HAS
NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM ANY AMERICAN DEATHS BUT
FRENCH AND BELGIAN SOURCES IN KOLWEZI BELIEVE FOUR
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PAGE 04 STATE 134347

AMERICANS DIED.

14. THERE ARE ABOUT 1,500 EUROPEANS WORKING OR
LIVING IN LIKASI, MANY MORE IN LUBUMBASHI AND SMALLER
NUMBERS IN A NUMBER OF RAILROAD, TRADE OR MINING
TOWNS OF THE PROVINCE.

15. THE SHARP DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND
BELGIANS OVER THE TOTAL EVACUATION OF THE SOME 2,500
EUROPEANS FROM KOLWEZI CONTINUES HERE. THE HEAD
OF THE FRENCH MILITARY MISSION IN ZAIRE, COL. YVES
GRAS, TOLD REPORTERS THAT "THE BELGIANS MADE A
FUNDAMENTAL ERROR IN MY OPINION" IN DECIDING TO
AIRLIFT ALL THEIR 1,000 NATIONALS OUT TO EUROPE.

16. HE CREDITED THIS FOR THE "PSYCHOSIS OF FLIGHT"
THAT RESULTED IN THE EMPTYING OF THE TOWN OF ALL
WHITES IN 48 HOURS. THE EUROPEAN SECTIONS OF
KOLWEZI ARE NOW ONLY INHABITED BY HOWLING DOGS
STANDING OUTSIDE HOMES AND WAITING FOR THEIR
MASTERS TO RETURN OR PROWLING THE STREETS.

17. OTHER PROBLEMS ARE ARISING IN THE LEGIONNAIRES'
RELATIONS WITH THE FOUR COMPANIES OF ZAIRIAN PARA-
TROOPERS STATIONED IN KOLWEZI. THERE HAVE BEEN
INCREASING SIGNS OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE TWO WHICH
ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ACTING UNDER ONE JOINT COMMAND
BUT IN FACT DO NOT.

18. INSTEAD, THE FRENCH SEEM TO BE MAKING ALL
DECISIONS REGARDING SECURITY AND CARRYING OUT MOST
OF THE HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCH AND DESTROY OPERATIONS
AROUND TOWN.

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PAGE 05 STATE 134347

19. THESE PROBLEMS HAVE LED OUTSIDE OBSERVERS TO FEEL THAT THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER WESTERN OR AFRICAN FORCE IS BECOMING A NECESSITY TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION.

20. THE BELGIANS HAVE LEFT BEHIND A REINFORCED BATTALION AT KAMINA, 140 MILES TO THE NORTH OF KOLWEZI, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN COMMITTED SO FAR TO PROTECTING THE THREATENED TOWNS WHERE WHITES HAVE BECOME JITTERY.

21. IN THE MEANTIME, THE FATE OF A PAN-AFRICAN FORCE TO FIGHT IN SHABA ALONGSIDE THE ZAIRIAN ARMY, PROPOSED BY GABON PRESIDENT OMAR BONGO LAST WEEKEND, APPEARS TO BE VERY UNCERTAIN. MOROCCO HAS SENT A 40-MAN MILITARY TEAM AS A TOKEN MEASURE OF SUPPORT BUT KING HASSAN IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE TOLD ZAIRIAN PRESIDENT MOBUTU THAT HE WILL NOT COMMIT COMBAT TROOPS UNLESS OTHER AFRICAN STATES AGREE TO DO SO.

22. LAST YEAR, MOROCCO WAS THE ONLY COUNTRY TO PROVIDE SUCH ASSISTANCE, DISPATCHING 1,500 TROOPS WHO QUICKLY PUT AN END TO THE SHABA INSURGENCY THEN UNDER WAY.

23. THERE HAS BEEN TALK OF GABON, SENEGAL, MOROCCO, TUNISIA AND EGYPT SENDING SOME TROOPS BUT SO FAR NOTHING HAS MATERIALIZED BEYOND THE SMALL MOROCCAN TEAM AND A PROMISE BY EGYPT TO SEND A STUDY MISSION, ACCORDING TO THE ZAIRE NEWS AGENCY.

24. THE IDEA WOULD BE TO USE THE AFRICAN TROOPS MAINLY FOR POLICING THE TOWN OF KOLWEZI AND OTHER THREATENED URBAN CENTERS IN SHABA PROVINCE WHILE FRENCH AND POSSIBLY BELGIAN PARATROOPERS LEAD THE OFFENSIVE TO CLEAR THE REBELS FROM THE COUNTRY.

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25. THE SUMMIT OF FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICAN STATES IN PARIS LEFT THE IDEA STILL IN THE PLANNING AND CONSULTATION STAGE WITH NO CONCRETE ACTION TAKEN BECAUSE OF A SHARP DIVISION WITH THE LOOSELY KNIT AND IDEOLOGICALLY DIVIDED GROUPING. BUT IT IS STILL POSSIBLE A FEW AFRICAN NATIONS MAY DECIDE TO

SEND TROOPS INDEPENDENTLY OF THE FORMAL FRENCH-SPEAKING BLOC.

26. THE SITUATION IN THE TOWN OF KOLWEZI ITSELF SHOWS LITTLE SIGN OF IMPROVEMENT. ZAIRIAN RED CROSS WORKERS HAVE BEGUN THE TASK OF BURYING SOME OF THE BLACK AND WHITE BODIES SCATTERED IN THE STREETS BUT THE RED CROSS HERE ANNOUNCED THERE WAS AN "IMMINENT DANGER" OF A BREAKOUT OF CHOLERA AND TYPHOID.

27. THERE IS STILL NO ELECTRICITY, WATER OR FOOD IN THE TOWN, ALTHOUGH THE REMAINING 30,000 TO 35,000 ZAIRIANS HAVE NOT ACTED AS IF THEY WERE ACUTELY SHORT OF BASIC ITEMS. CORRESPONDENTS HAVE SEEN NO BEGGERS IN THE STREET OR BEEN ASKED FOR FOOD. BUT THE ECONOMY REMAINS AT A COMPLETE STANDSTILL AND IT CAN ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE SHORTAGES OF FOOD BECOMES A PROBLEM. UNQUOTE.

28. ENCRYPTED FOR TRANSMISSION ONLY. DECONT;OL ON RECEIPT. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INVASIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE134347
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: WSWING:LM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780222-0313
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780513/aaaaakyi.tel
Line Count: 245
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 88cdb695-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2547594
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON SHABA
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG, US
To: KINSHASA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/88cdb695-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014